ffice of the Ombudsman Annual Report

Ensuring every voice is heard

April 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005

Mission

Fostering confidence in the public service by promoting the principles of fairness, integrity, and good governance.

Our logo represents the arms of the public, the government, and the Office of the Ombudsman raised for fairness, integrity, and good governance.

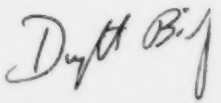
March 2006

The Honourable Cecil Clarke
Speaker of the House of Assembly
The Legislative Assembly
Province of Nova Scotia

Sir:

In accordance with Section 24(1) of the Ombudsman Act, being Chapter 327 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, as amended, I have the pleasure of presenting to you, and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Office of the Ombudsman's Annual Report April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005.

Respectfully,



Dwight Bishop
Ombudsman

Table of Contents

Message from the Ombudsman	2
The Year in Review	3
Office Overview	6
Investigation and Complaint Services	7
Youth and Seniors' Services	8
Specific Cases	10
Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations	14
Outreach	15
Statistics	16
Looking Ahead	20
Contact Us	22

Message from the Ombudsman

January 2005 marked the anniversary of my first full year as Ombudsman. It has been a year of transition, with changes designed to increase our efficiency, effectiveness, and ability to promote accountability and fairness in the way government services are delivered to the people of Nova Scotia.

All of the changes implemented and described in this document are indicative of the evolving role of the Ombudsman over the past ten to fifteen years.

As indicated by the Supreme Court of Canada, the Ombudsman's duty is to examine both sides of a complaint, assess what, if any, harm has been done, and recommend ways of remedying it.

In the past, this process was prompted by the receipt of a complaint. While we do still investigate individual complaints, we also focus on proactively improving systems. We achieve this by several means:

- Education. We educate provincial and municipal government departments and the public about the role of the Ombudsman and the benefits of an informal, co-operative approach to complaint resolution. We motivate people to communicate, to reflect on their own attitudes, and to seek creative-yet-fair solutions.
- Pattern examination. We look for trends to see where government could be working better and recommend improvements.
- Own motion investigations. We have the authority to examine government activities and practices even when no complaint has been filed.

I have been encouraged by the general willingness of government departments and agencies to work with us in a co-operative, creative, non-confrontational manner to resolve complaints. We believe this informal, highly communicative process achieves stronger results for all involved.

I would like to add, on a more personal note, how pleased and proud I am of the dedication and commitment of the staff of this Office and their willingness to weather the disruptive changes this year brought. Our people believe in the important role the public service provides the community, and in the fundamental principle that every citizen of this province has a right to be heard and treated with fairness, sensitivity, and respect.

Dwight Bishop

The 2004-2005 Business Plan of the Office of the Ombudsman set the following goals:

- To ensure all complaints are investigated objectively and thoroughly, in a confidential and timely manner, while ensuring administrative fairness and good governance by a responsible and accountable government.
- To increase citizens' access to, and awareness of, the Office of the Ombudsman through communication and improved accessibility.
- To improve the administration of public services by identifying specific and systemic issues, making appropriate recommendations, and monitoring compliance.

The Office underwent many changes this year – all of which helped us meet these goals.

Office of the Ombudsman staff, left to right: Lois Smith, Kay Rogers-Lidstone, Sonya Ferrara, Phylicia Crawley, Janet McKinnon, Dwight Bishop, James Stewart, Andre Williams, Elaine Venturini, Danny Patterson, Christine Brennan, Kim Langlois.

Staffing

During the fiscal period of this report, we were able to stabilize our workforce. Previously, numerous positions within the Office were filled with casual or contract staff. Those positions were advertised, interviews were held, and successful candidates chosen. All staff were then appointed under the authority of the Ombudsman Act, giving the Office full independence.

This stabilization and increase in staffing resources allowed us to restructure into four distinct sectors:

1. Investigation and Complaint Services
2. Youth and Seniors' Services
3. Disclosure of Wrongdoing
4. Administration

In order to continue to improve our service to the public and ensure quality investigations and administrative reviews, staff received training in a number of areas, including foundations of administrative justice, ethics, media, investigation techniques, supervisory skills, Aboriginal perceptions, and diversity and employment equity.

"Working as an Intake Officer allowed me to assess complaints, to assist complainants in navigating through appeal processes, and to resolve issues. Working in an environment that allowed me to assist with projects made it a very positive experience."

Barb Kerr, Dalhousie Law Student

"(My professor) asked permission to use my report in a course he teaches. My report will be part of the required literature students have to read ... I'm very excited to keep working on it and to publish it in an international magazine."

Yolanda Schmal, Political Science Student, Faculty of Social Sciences Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
(Translation: "Free University of Amsterdam." Free in the sense that all religions are welcome.)

A standardized investigation protocol and a quality assurance program were implemented this year. These measures allow us to determine priorities, define issues, and monitor time frames to ensure all complaints and inquiries are processed efficiently. As a result of this new process and the addition of responsibilities relating to the Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations, our current computer tracking systems were found to no longer meet office requirements. We hope to upgrade or replace them in 2006.

Revised job descriptions were developed for all investigation staff. The descriptions incorporated the new investigation process while allowing for differences when addressing youth or seniors' issues. Our policy and procedures manual and staff orientation binder were revised. All staff took an oath of confidentiality and agreed to criminal records and child abuse registry checks.

Our office physically relocated this year, moving into new accommodations on an interim basis as we proceed with government tendering practices to acquire more suitable and permanent office space.

Diversity and Co-op Students

We continued to work towards increasing diversity within our office. In the past, we have participated in the diversity student employment program; this year, we provided employment and training to two students from this program.

We also welcomed other students into our office this year, one from Nova Scotia Community College's student practicum program; another from Dalhousie Law School, through the province's Summer Female Mentorship Program; and an international student from Holland, who was conducting research on the impact of recommendations made by this Office as part of her internship program.

Expanded Jurisdiction

In May 2004, the Ombudsman Act was amended and, that December, Cabinet approved the regulations that clarified and expanded our jurisdiction in several areas. These include school boards, child welfare agencies, licensed child-caring facilities, nursing homes and homes for the aged, residential care facilities for seniors, hospitals, and community colleges. As a result, our Office will be able to expand our complaint resolution process for youth in residential child-caring facilities as well as develop an outreach and complaint resolution program for seniors.

Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations

In September 2004, our mandate expanded when the government implemented the Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations and policy. The new regulations provided a process, as well as protection, for government employees reporting wrongdoing and provided our Office an integral part in this process.

Ombudsman staff discussed with the Public Service Commission training and other initiatives related to implementing these regulations and policy. We have developed procedures to manage and investigate instances of disclosures of alleged wrongdoing received from government employees.

Issues and Complaints

We often receive complaints from the public about government responsibilities or private companies that fall outside our jurisdiction. This is one of the reasons we implemented an educational outreach program; so we could help the public better understand what the Office of the Ombudsman is, and what we can do. We believe these efforts are working. This year saw an increase in the number of jurisdictional issues over non-jurisdictional issues brought to our attention. The percentage of issues received within our mandate in 2004-05 was 62.47 per cent. In 2003-04, 52.13 per cent of issues were jurisdictional.

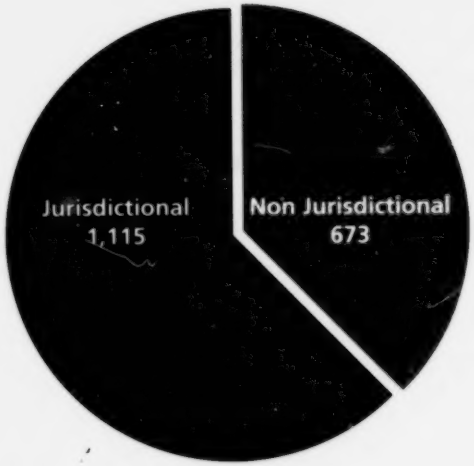
We also streamlined our complaint resolution process this year so we could address complaints in a more timely fashion.

Education and Outreach

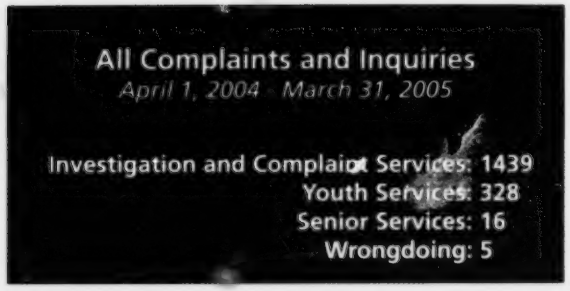
We are continuing to educate the public and government about the role and mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman. Staff provided a total of thirty (30) presentations targeted to seniors, government employees, police, and community groups. In addition, we expanded our outreach by participating in the 50+ Expo, which will now be an annual event for our Office. The Ombudsman also conducted presentations and met with provincial and municipal government officials.

Thirty-nine (39) site visits were made to youth in care and custody facilities and, as well, eighty-three (83) information sessions were held with new admissions.

Total complaints and inquiries received
April 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005



Office Overview


All Complaints and Inquiries
April 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005
Investigation and Complaint Services: 1439
Youth Services: 328
Senior Services: 16
Wrongdoing: 5

The Office of the Ombudsman exists to ensure the people of Nova Scotia are treated fairly and respectfully by the provincial and municipal governments. Individuals or groups can bring their complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman and know their issues will be heard.

It is important to remember that the Ombudsman is not an advocate for the complainant. The Ombudsman's job is to hear both sides and, when warranted, recommend a solution. Our investigations are confidential. There is no fee for our services.

Staff of the Office have the authority to carry out most of the Ombudsman's responsibilities; however, they cannot be given the power to issue a report at the conclusion of an investigation. The Ombudsman must sign these reports.

While the Ombudsman has full authority to investigate agencies and departments, there are some areas outside the Office's jurisdiction. These include:

- federal government departments or agencies
- private individuals and corporations
- decisions of Cabinet
- decisions of courts and judges
- a solicitor or prosecuting officer acting for the Crown
- decisions of elected provincial or municipal officials
- matters covered by a legislated avenue of appeal

The Complaint Resolution Process

To ensure that all complaints brought to the Office are assessed in an effective manner and the Ombudsman's Act is applied consistently, we have developed the following three-step procedure: Intake, Administrative Review, and Investigation.

Intake

An Intake Officer screens each inquiry or complaint to determine if it is within our jurisdiction. If it is not, we assist the complainant by referring him or her to the correct authority. If the issue is within our jurisdiction, the Intake Officer advises the complainant of any appeal process that may be available. If the matter merits further review by this Office, the Intake Officer refers the matter to an Ombudsman Representative.

Administrative Review

An Ombudsman Representative gathers additional facts and researches the issue by reviewing policies, procedures, and the relevant legislation. The Representative verifies what, if any, avenues of appeal are available and provides all parties with an opportunity to be heard impartially.

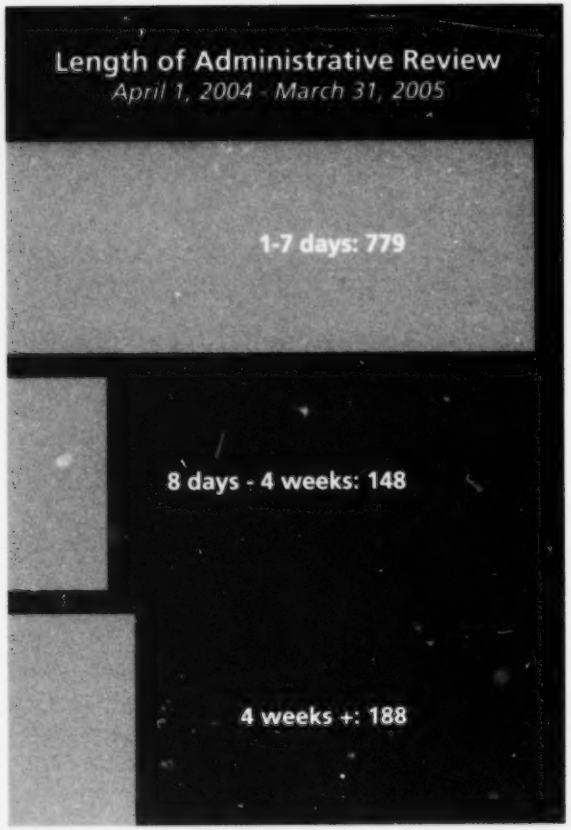
If an appropriate appeal mechanism is not available, the Representative details and identifies the issues relating to the complaint.

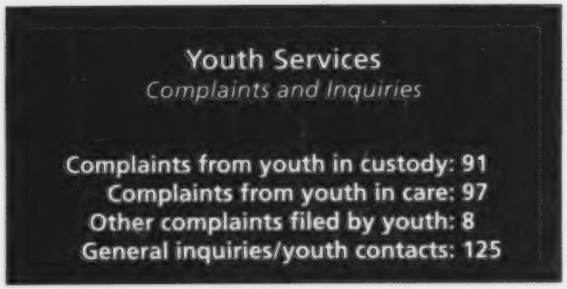
Our goal is to seek meaningful resolutions for all parties and our experience has been that this is often achieved through the use of mediation and alternate dispute resolution processes. These creative, informal, communicative approaches tend to be efficient and effective. They are also consistent with the approaches used by other Ombudsman Offices in Canada.

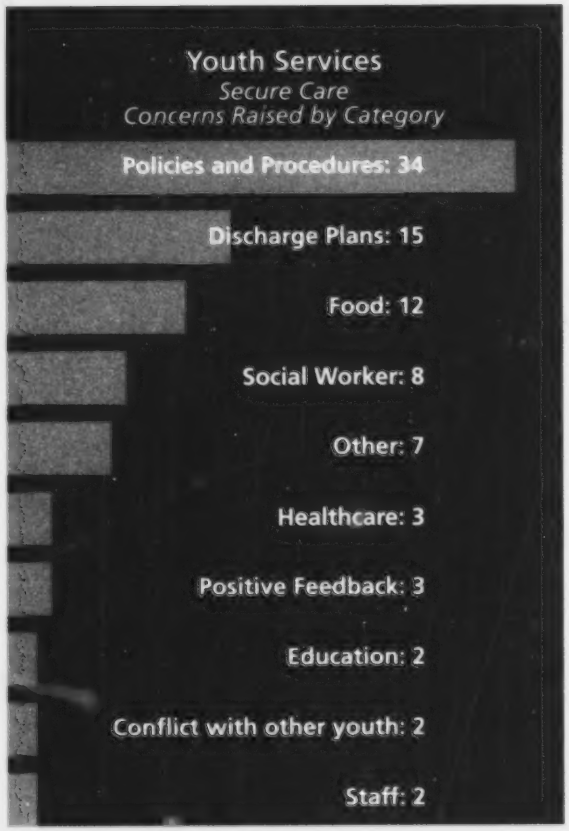
Administrative reviews are usually completed within one to four weeks. In cases where an informal resolution is not successful, the Ombudsman Representative moves the matter to the investigation stage.

Investigation

An in-depth review of the legislation, regulations, processes, and procedures is undertaken to discover the root of the complainant's concern. This process may include meeting with the parties, interviewing witnesses, and conducting research across Canada to determine best practices. If we discover improvements are needed, we make informal or formal recommendations for changes to the policies or practices. Our goal is to reduce or eliminate the chance of future complaints. Our recommendations are not orders; however, we are very pleased with the willingness of most government departments to accept and implement our recommendations. This has resulted in positive changes in many programs and services delivered by government to the public.




Youth Services
Complaints and Inquiries
Complaints from youth in custody: 91
Complaints from youth in care: 97
Other complaints filed by youth: 8
General inquiries/youth contacts: 125



Youth Services

In recognition of the rights of children and youth, and in response to a growing demand for government accountability where its services affect youth, the Office of the Ombudsman has established a specialized child and youth mandate.

Youth Services reviews and investigates concerns received from children, youth, parents, guardians, and youth workers in relation to provincial and municipal youth-serving systems. We monitor conditions in these facilities and recommend ways the service can be improved. Our goal is to help government identify and resolve problems before they escalate into bigger, more serious, issues.

We have made ourselves easily accessible to hear youths' voices. We make regular visits to youth-serving facilities, including all youth correctional facilities, the secure-care facility, municipal and RCMP holding cells, sheriff services and court holding cells, as well as licensed residential child-caring facilities (also known as group homes). Materials with our toll-free number and address are prominently displayed in youth-serving areas in three languages: English, French, and Mi'kmaw. We also meet with new admissions to the youth correctional facilities.

Through these regular site visits, and our education outreach program, we are raising awareness of the services we offer to youth as well as to the people who work in youth-serving environments.

Virtually all of the incarcerated youth and youth in secure care within this province are aware of the services our Office provides them. In 2004, awareness of the Ombudsman Youth Services was relatively low in residential child-caring facilities, but we anticipate that will change in 2005 as we implement our Residential Child-Caring Facilities Complaint Resolution Process, a program we have been working on for several years. We will also be expanding our services to include youth accessing provincial and municipal youth-serving systems.

All complaints are tracked based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and, due to the time sensitivity of issues facing youth, our process focuses on mediation. We have found that a co-operative, non-confrontational process leads to stronger, more satisfactory results for all involved and have been very pleased to see our informal recommendations are almost always acted upon.

Youth Services collaborates with several partners, including municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and other provincial departments, to continue the advancement of child and youth rights.

The Office has been very successful in our child and youth mandate. We have helped establish a culture of children's rights that includes amended policies and practices. We have contributed to youth resiliency by promoting self-advocacy and by informing youth of all the channels and means at their disposal to ensure their voices are heard.

Seniors' Services

Seniors are the fastest growing population segment in Nova Scotia, according to a 2003 statistical profile prepared by the Nova Scotia Senior Citizens' Secretariat. Nova Scotia already has the oldest population in Atlantic Canada and the third oldest in all of Canada. That population is expected to almost double by the year 2026.

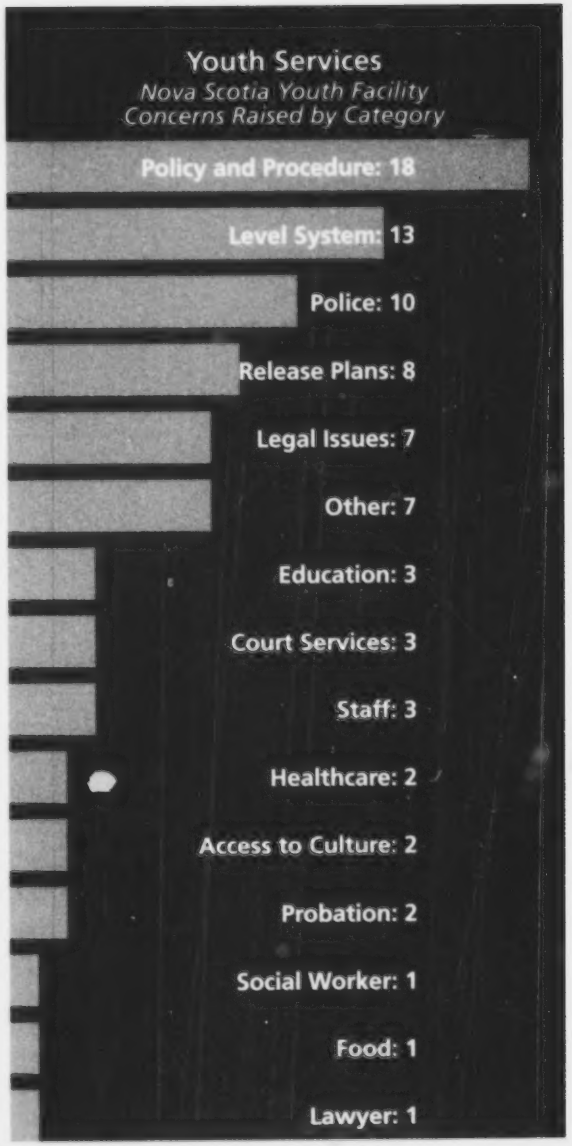
The Office of the Ombudsman recognizes how these changing demographics will affect the development of policies, programs, and services within the province. That is why we are developing a Seniors' Services Initiative designed to give us a stronger presence with seniors in residential care facilities, nursing homes, and homes for the aged.

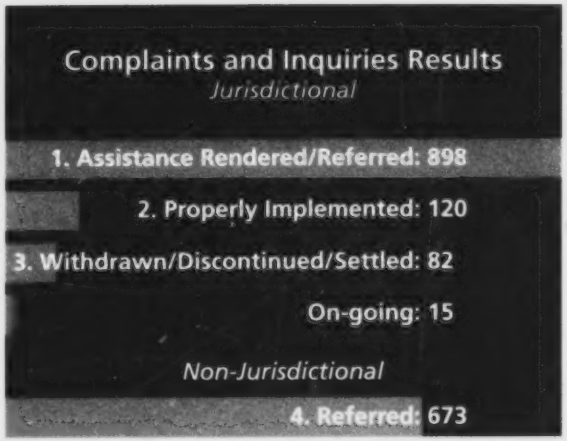
This initiative has two phases. Phase one included participation on oversight committees dealing with seniors' issues, outreach to Senior Advisory Councils throughout the province, as well as the development of a complaint resolution process.

In the second phase, we will promote a visitation process for facilities, in consultation with the Department of Health.

Our Seniors' Services Initiative will be similar in many respects to our Youth Services Initiative. Ombudsman staff dedicated to our Seniors' Services will visit facilities on a scheduled basis to explain the role and function of the Office and to discuss any concerns the seniors and/or staff may have.

Primary responsibility for seniors in care facilities rests with the Department of Health. Through this initiative, the Office hopes to increase the comfort and confidence of residents in care, as well as assist all seniors in navigating government processes. Our overall goal is to improve the delivery of government services.





1. Includes inquiries/administrative reviews resulting in: changes in approach, procedures, and policies by government; providing information and clarification of appeals, processes and procedures.
2. Administrative reviews result in findings of no mal-administration by government.
3. Complaint ends prior to a finding being made.
4. Information is provided that assists with a matter outside our mandate.

The Office also conducted 14 formal (s.15) investigations, six were opened in this fiscal year and all were completed, with eight being monitored to ensure compliance with our recommendations. The recommendations involved changes to policy regarding distribution of medication and other offender safety issues, enforcement of court orders, including training to assist staff to interpret these orders, a program review regarding assistance provisions, conveyance of improperly in-filled crown land, changes to appeal procedures in a senior's facility, changes to policies dealing with medical emergencies, environmental permits and regulations, and changes to tender procedures.

Example 1: Environmental Issues

A private company had been operating in the province since 1996 with full government approval. A number of residents in the area raised issues about this company and about the actions of two government bodies in relation to the company. The complaints were significant: one related to environmental issues, the other to financing issues.

The complainants believed one of the sites in question should be considered protected and they provided evidence to support their position. The government bodies involved supplied responding evidence in support of their approvals for the company.

A rather complex and in-depth investigation ensued. Over a period of several years we interviewed multiple parties, including a private environmental specialist referred to us by the complainant. We conducted tours of the site, researched alternate dispute resolution processes, reviewed documents and videotapes of Public Accounts Committee sessions, met with solicitors, and had on-going discussions with the spokesperson for the complainants.

In the end, we identified several areas in which practices could be improved. All parties contributed feedback that made up the Ombudsman final report. We made recommendations that would significantly change the way the departments involved deliver their services. In all, we made thirteen recommendations including developing:

- procedural standards and quality assurance reviews
- criteria to determine when to use alternate dispute resolution processes
- a communication policy, including a public guide to the relevant legislation and a brochure explaining compliance methods
- a comprehensive site evaluation report

The government departments involved have agreed in principle to the majority of the recommendations. Improvements have been and continue to be made to the various processes outlined in this report. Our discussions with the departments will continue as we monitor the implementation of our recommendations.

Example 2: Independent Review

A deputy minister contacted this Office requesting we conduct an independent review. During the first heavy snowfall of the season a woman called to request her road be cleared as her husband had recently been released from the hospital with a heart condition. There was no emergency identified at that time. The road was cleared after the request but during that time her husband died at home. The woman was distraught and felt her husband's death could have been prevented if the road had been cleared as requested.

Our Representatives conducted a review of the procedures used by the government department in question. Our findings indicated that the actions of the department and its employees were appropriate and did not contribute to the man's death. We did, however, note that improvements could be made to the current process. We made seven recommendations, including improving procedures by developing contingency plans for the early spring/ late fall seasons and providing staff with additional training in responding to phone requests, appropriate conduct, and reporting mechanisms. These recommendations have been implemented.

Example 3: Safety Issue

An offender in custody called our Office in a state of fear. This person had both physical and mental disabilities and, upon being taken into custody, had informed the facility he was afraid of being harmed if he was put in with the general population. Although he was held in a private cell, he was allegedly assaulted by some of the other offenders. When our Representative received his call, the offender was afraid he would be harmed again. We discussed security issues with officials at the facility and our review resulted in recommendations. The facility is reviewing its standard operating procedures to determine how to make improvements. We are monitoring their progress.

Example 4: Lack of Privacy Using Phones

A youth living in a youth facility complained that there was no privacy to make phone calls to our Office. The phone in the unit was centrally located in an open area; other residents and staff could overhear all phone conversations. The youth wanted the opportunity to discuss personal or sensitive issues and was frustrated by the lack of privacy.

An Ombudsman Representative spoke to officials at the facility and was informed that the centre had some physical challenges in building a private phone cubicle. The centre further expressed that they would continue to review the concern. Soon after, the centre's facility manager informed the Office that an architect with Transportation and Public Works was providing suggestions on how they could build an area to provide privacy for phone calls. As of March 2005, that project was on its way to completion.

Example 5: Retrieval of Personal Belongings

During a routine visit to a youth facility, an Ombudsman Representative met with several youth who said they had trouble retrieving their personal belongings after being held, then released, by officers from one police department. The belongings in question were articles of clothing that were being kept for evidence. The problem was that the youth were released during cold winter months with no substitute clothing provided.

An Ombudsman Representative met with the superintendent of the police department and was informed that there was no formal policy in place to provide substitute clothing in such incidences. The superintendent further said that some police officers would call parents/guardians to bring replacement clothing for the youth in these circumstances, but this action was at their own discretion.

The Representative made inquiries of all municipal police forces in Nova Scotia and discovered that all other departments did provide substitute clothing/footwear or contacted parents/guardians to supply these articles whenever it was necessary to hold such articles as evidence. In this way, the youth being released would have protection against the elements.

A letter was sent to the chief of police outlining our concerns and recommendations. In response, the police department advised us that a written policy would be in place within the month requiring police officers to provide substitute clothing/footwear and that the police had made contact with a local Salvation Army outlet to supply these articles as needed on a 24/7 basis.

Example 6: Senior Assessment

A woman contacted our Office expressing concern that her mother was being transferred from a residential care facility to a licensed nursing home. The complainant, who had power of attorney for her mother, advised that she had not been given proper documentation or sufficient time to file an appeal about the move.

After our investigation, the department in question agreed to evaluate its appeal policy as it related to provision of information. A report recommended the department provide written notifications within a specific time frame and that it clearly outline its functional assessment criteria to the resident and/or family member responsible. In this way, the resident or family member would have an understanding of the situation and be aware of any changes.

Example 7: Inadequate Mattresses

Several youth living in a youth-care facility informed an Ombudsman Representative that the mattresses at the facility were inadequate and too thin.

The complainants originally brought the issue to the attention of the facility staff, and were advised to contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

An Ombudsman Representative spoke with management at the facility, who agreed with the issue and later confirmed they had purchased new mattresses for all the youth in care.

Example 8: Use of Physical Intervention and Restraint

Over a brief period of time, Ombudsman Representatives received several complaints from youth residents respecting the use of physical intervention at a youth-care facility and decided to review the matter in detail. The complaints ranged from insufficient reason(s) provided by staff for the physical intervention to techniques utilized by staff, frequency of intervention, and minor injuries due to youth resistance.

Facility policy dictates the use of physical intervention or restraint may be used only when all other less-restrictive interventions have been tried and have not been effective in preventing, or controlling, behaviour that has caused, or is likely to cause, injury. Restraints may also be used when other techniques are inappropriate, given the nature of a situation and the danger the resident presents to themselves, other residents, and/or staff.

The techniques that can be used are approved by the Crisis Prevention Institute of Brookfield, Wisconsin. All facility staff are trained in accordance with the Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Program developed by the Crisis Prevention Institute.

Ombudsman Representatives visited the facility, met with the supervisors, discussed the documented incidents, and reviewed the facility's policy and procedures manual. The facility also underwent a full licensing inspection by a Departmental Program Licensing Officer. Incident reports and logs relating to the use of physical restraints were reviewed, staff were interviewed, and a report was prepared for management outlining the facility's compliance with the Children and Family Services Act regulations and policy.

While the review showed the facility was meeting policy requirements, the matter was thoroughly reviewed in an effort to further improve the use of such interventions.

Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations

The Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations came into effect on September 16, 2004. The regulations provide a process for the disclosure of allegations of government wrongdoing and protection from reprisal for employees who reported wrongdoing. Our first report under the regulations will be issued to the Public Service Commissioner in April 2005.

Through the disclosure process, any employee of the public service who reasonably believes that they are being asked to commit a wrongdoing, or that a wrongdoing has been or is about to be committed, may disclose the matter to their supervisor or, if they feel this is not appropriate, report the matter to their deputy minister.

The Disclosure of Wrongdoing regulations also provide an avenue for government employees to bring forward concerns regarding wrongdoing to the Office of the Ombudsman. Our role in the disclosure process is to provide an independent and fair mechanism to review and investigate disclosures of alleged wrongdoing when employees believe a disclosure cannot be raised within their department, or believe a disclosure was not adequately addressed.

In the past year, we expanded our outreach program to the public and government. We believe it is important to let government bodies, communities, and individuals know who we are and how we may be able help them. This approach has helped some government bodies make changes to eliminate problem areas that could have led to complaints, and it has encouraged other groups to step forward and make their voices heard.

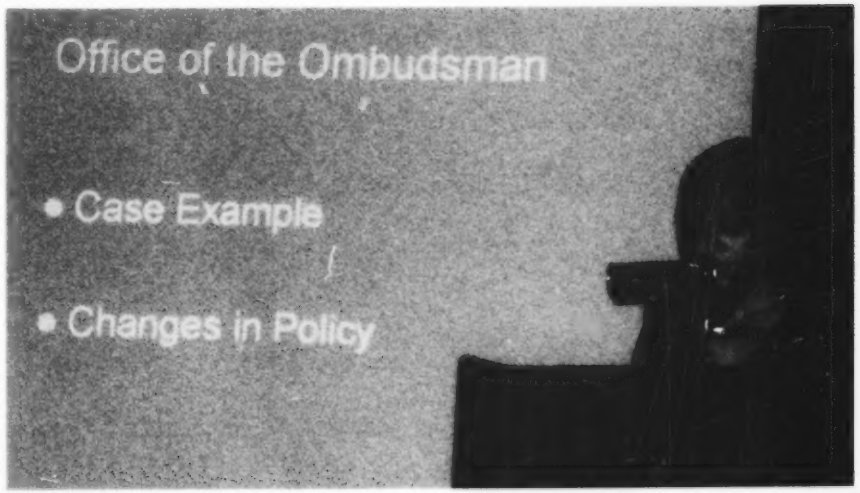
When we are presenting to the public, we inform citizens how they can deal with situations on their own. We encourage them to use existing appeal processes to address issues, allowing the governing body the opportunity to address the issue themselves before our Office becomes involved. We also teach them about the importance of presenting their facts clearly for best results.

We help government staff understand the importance of explaining their decisions in such a way that the people affected can understand what is happening to them and why. We work hard to build strong relationships with government offices; employees know they can pick up the phone and call us for advice at any time or refer a complainant to us for more help.

We would like to thank all the government staff and citizens who took time to attend one of our presentations this year or, in turn, presented one to us. These include:

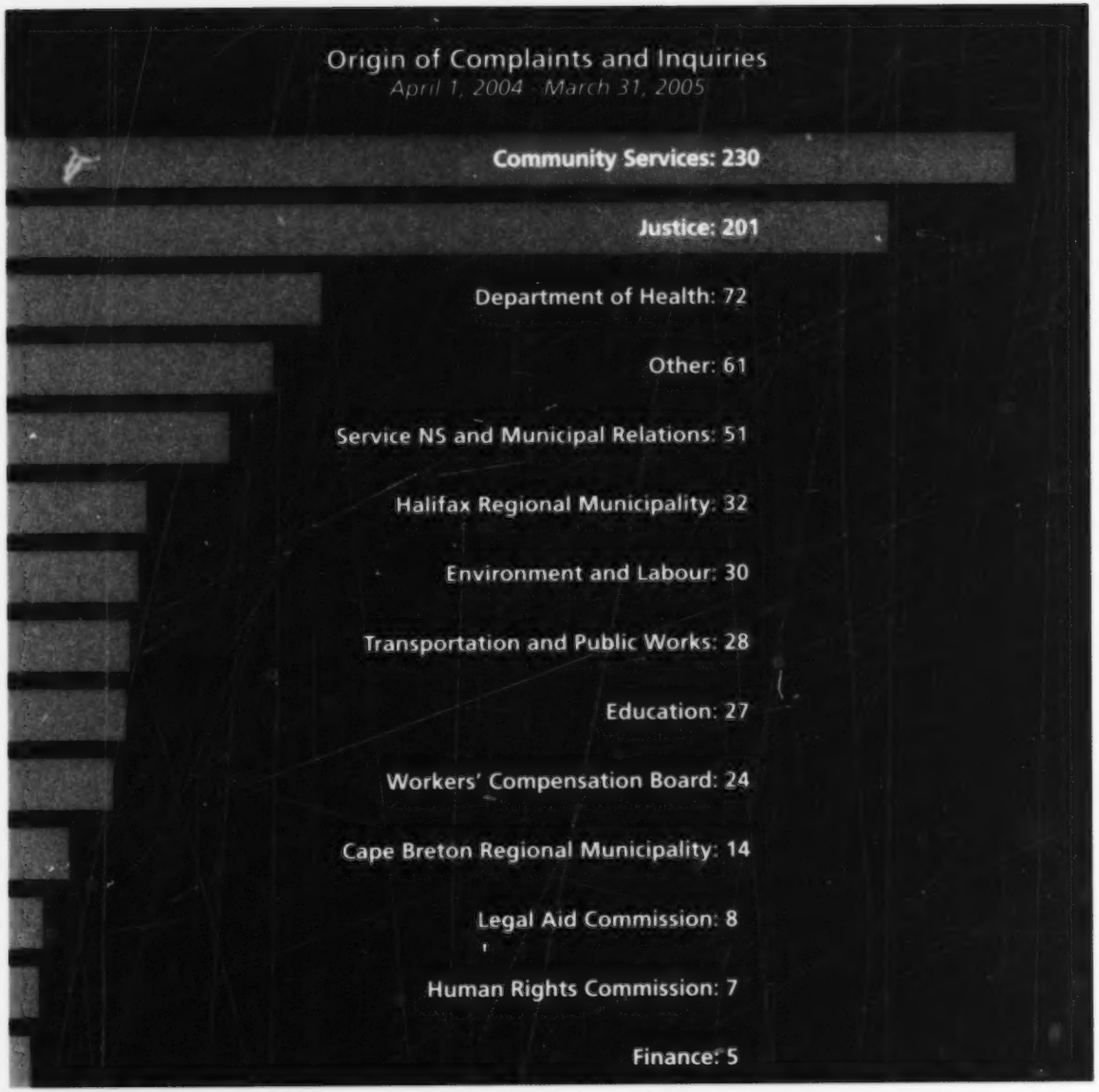
- Nova Scotia Police Commission
- Human Rights Commission
- Department of Environment and Labour (Monitoring and Compliance)
- Communications Nova Scotia (Media Training)
- RCMP (Training System Review)
- Public Service Commission (Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations)
- Department of Justice (Correctional Services) and Ethics Session
- Sheriff Services
- Black Cultural Centre
- Department of Health
- Community Services (Wood Street Centre)
- Seniors Citizens Secretariat (Seniors 50+ Expo)

In 2004, the Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (CACOLE) launched a program requesting academic writing and research relating to the area of criminal justice or social policy development. They selected a paper prepared by Sonya Ferrara, Ombudsman Representative, Youth & Seniors' Services, in which she explored whether the Nova Scotia Ombudsman Office has an impact on how police personnel carry out their work, with particular emphasis on the treatment of youth. Sonya Ferrara will present her research paper, entitled "*Making the case for youth rights training: a study of incarcerated youth and police personnel's attitudes on youth rights,*" at CACOLE's annual meeting in October 2005.



Sonya Ferrara presenting at a CACOLE annual meeting.

Origin of Complaints and Inquiries
April 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005

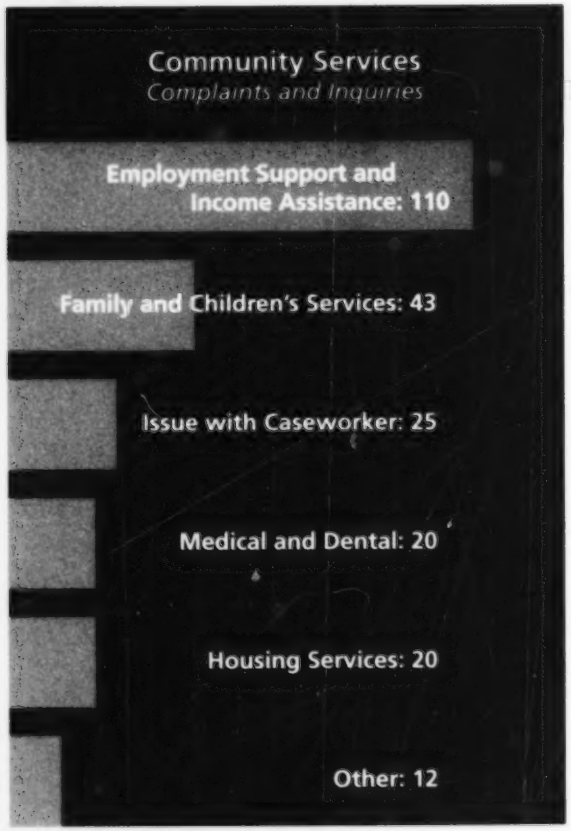


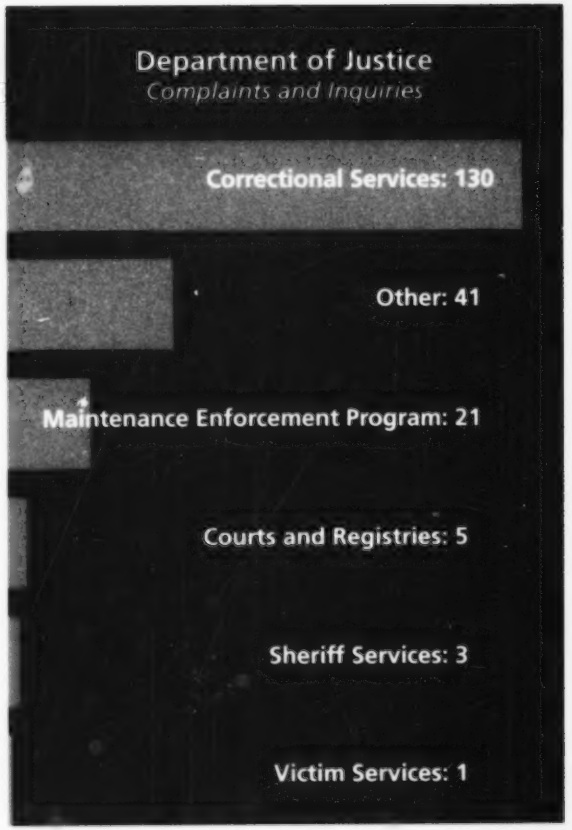
Origin of Complaints and Inquiries
continued

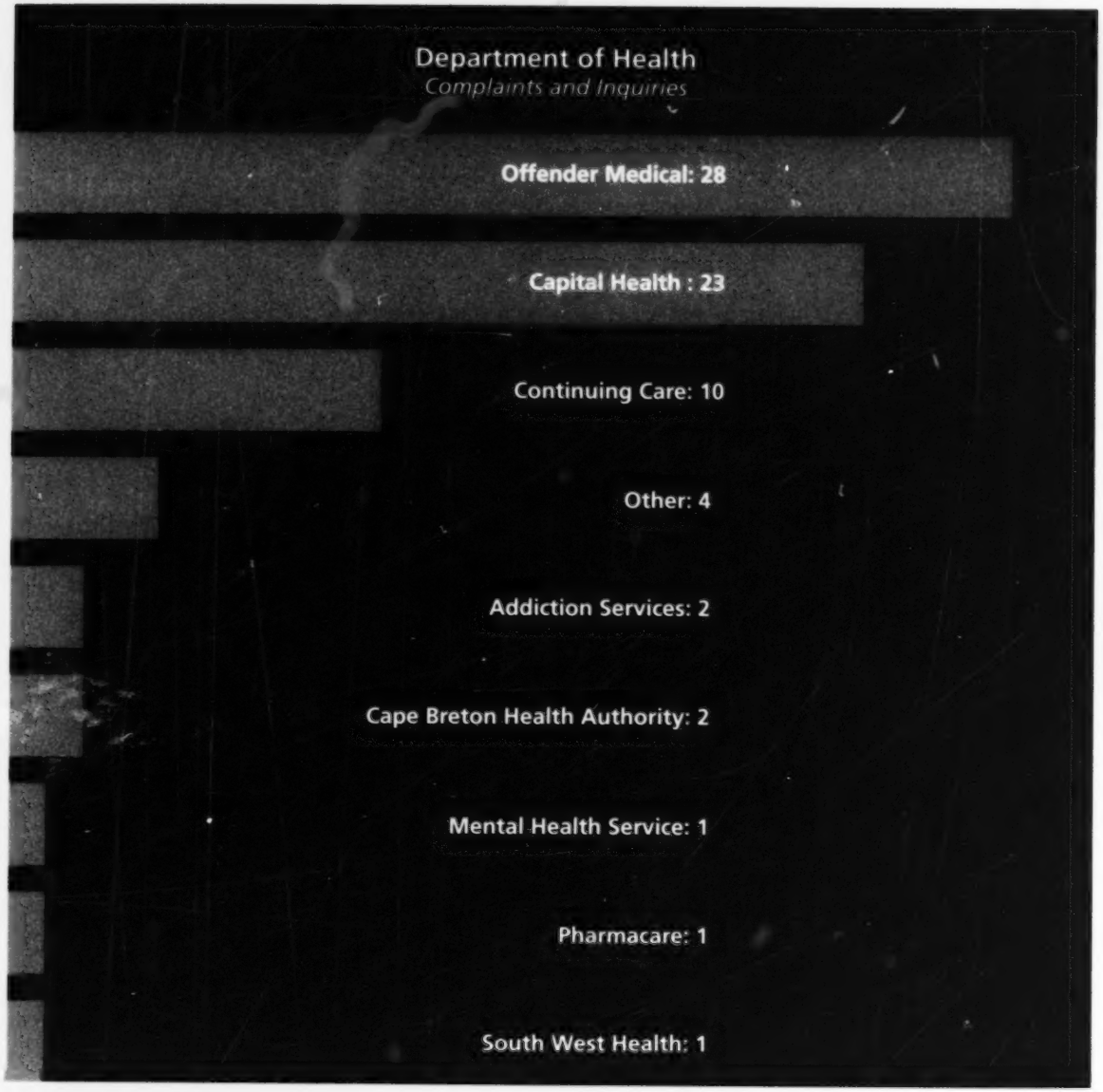
County of Kings	4
County of Pictou	4
District of East Hants	4
Halifax Regional School Board	4
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy	3
Natural Resources	3
Kentville	3
Stellarton	3
Annapolis Valley Regional School Board	2
County of Richmond	2
District of Lunenburg	2
Medical Service Insurance	2
Police Commission	2
Southwest Regional School Board	2
Amherst	1
Annapolis Royal	1
Antigonish	1
Alcohol & Gaming Authority	1
Canada/NS Business Service Centre	1
Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board	1
Chignecto-Central Regional School Board	1
County of Antigonish	1
County of Colchester	1
County of Victoria	1

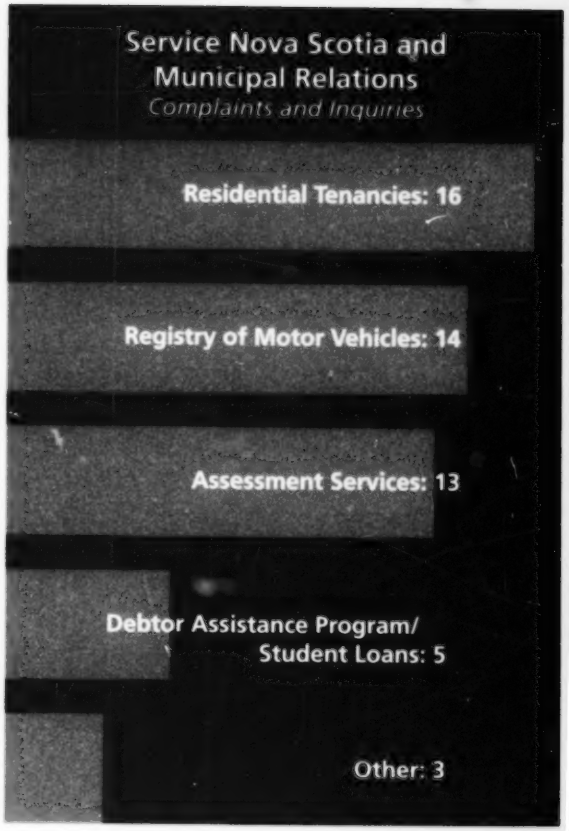
Origin of Complaints and Inquiries
continued

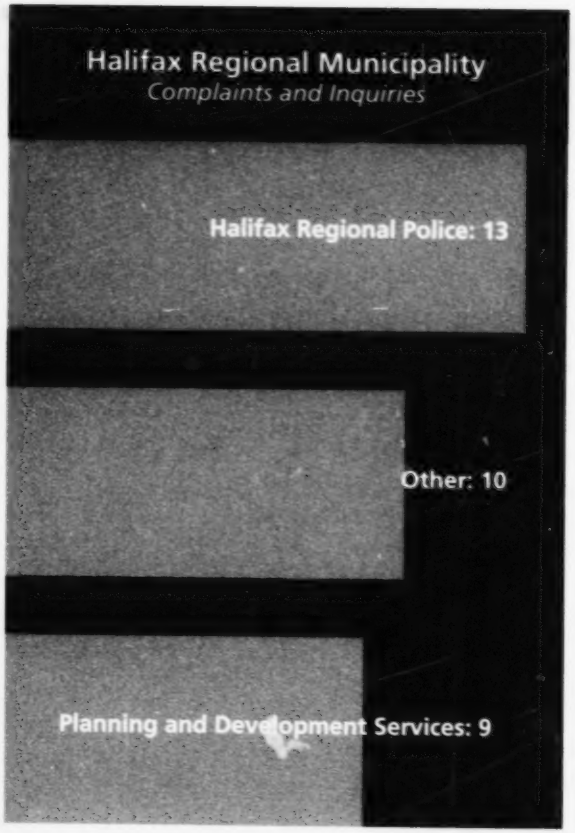
District of Barrington	1
District of Chester	1
District of Clare	1
District of Digby	1
District of Shelburne	1
District of West Hants	1
Emergency Measures Organization	1
Energy	1
Farm Loan Board	1
Liquor Commission	1
New Glasgow	1
NS Utility & Review Board	1
Office of Economic Development	1
Office of Health Promotion	1
Premier's Office	1
Public Service Commission	1
Region of Queens Municipality	1
Springhill	1
Stewiacke	1
Technology & Science Secretariat	1
Truro	1
Westville	1
Windsor	1
Yarmouth	1

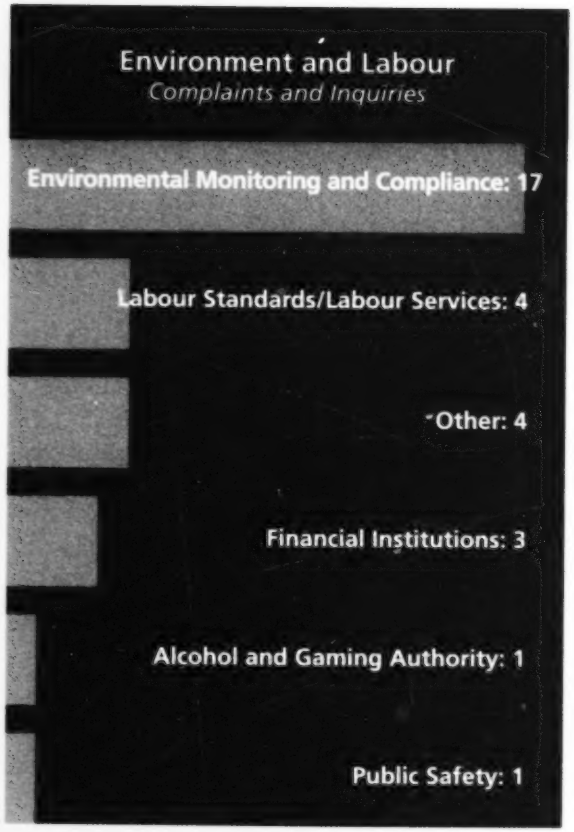


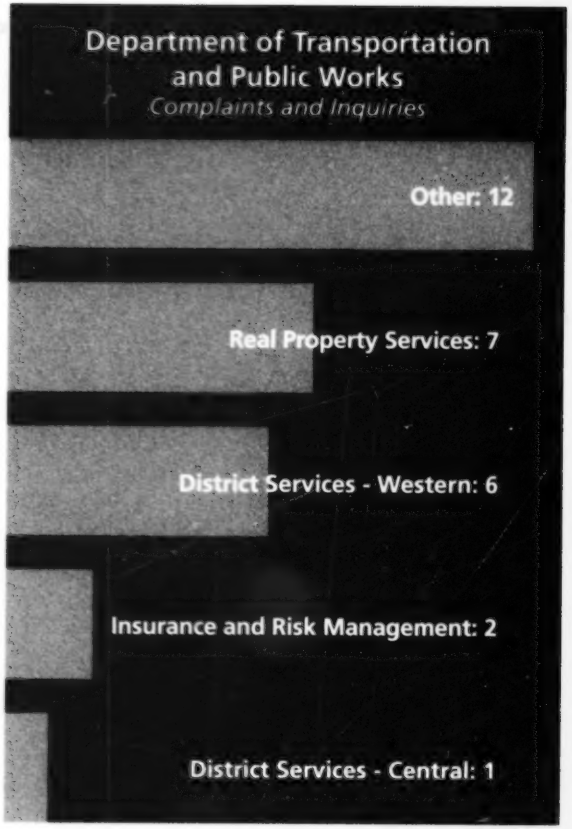



Department of Health
Complaints and Inquiries
Offender Medical: 28
Capital Health : 23
Continuing Care: 10
Other: 4
Addiction Services: 2
Cape Breton Health Authority: 2
Mental Health Service: 1
Pharmacare: 1
South West Health: 1


Service Nova Scotia and
Municipal Relations
Complaints and Inquiries
Residential Tenancies: 16
Registry of Motor Vehicles: 14
Assessment Services: 13
Debtor Assistance Program/
Student Loans: 5
Other: 3


Halifax Regional Municipality
Complaints and Inquiries
Halifax Regional Police: 13
Other: 10
Planning and Development Services: 9


Environment and Labour
Complaints and Inquiries
Environmental Monitoring and Compliance: 17
Labour Standards/Labour Services: 4
Other: 4
Financial Institutions: 3
Alcohol and Gaming Authority: 1
Public Safety: 1


Department of Transportation and Public Works
Complaints and Inquiries
Other: 12
Real Property Services: 7
District Services - Western: 6
Insurance and Risk Management: 2
District Services - Central: 1

Looking Ahead

The Office of the Ombudsman saw many changes in the 2004-2005 fiscal period – all of which helped us contribute to making government responsible, accountable, and fair to the people.

These changes will have effects that reach into 2005-2006 and beyond.

With our staff reorganization complete, we will undertake team building and staff training initiatives. Performance agreements with measurable objectives will be written for each employee.

We will improve our services to adult corrections. We will also conduct "road clinics," where Ombudsman Representatives will travel to various parts of the province to make ourselves available to individuals who wish to file complaints or obtain more information about us.

We will continue to examine patterns in complaints and to foster relationships with government departments with the goal of identifying and resolving issues before they escalate. One step we will be taking this year is to notify deputy ministers, within four weeks of beginning an inquiry, that we have an investigation underway in their department. In this way, the deputy minister can encourage full and prompt co-operation with our Representatives.

Amendments to the Ombudsman Act that clarified and expanded our jurisdiction will allow us to proceed with plans that will give us an even greater presence for youth and seniors in care. We will also continue to increase our outreach to the community, both culturally and geographically.

We will continue to play a pivotal role in developing policies and procedures in the Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations. In 2005-2006, we will establish a position with primary responsibility for wrongdoing inquiries and complaints; a wrongdoing telephone line will be installed to provide a confidential avenue for government employees to obtain information regarding the regulations. We will also develop a work plan to accomplish the goals of providing a quality complaint resolution process, promoting awareness and understanding of these regulations, increasing fairness and accountability in the public sector, and promoting work environments that are supportive of employees who wish to disclose wrongdoing.

In the upcoming year we will be updating information on our website and are reviewing methods to make the site interactive so citizens can share their complaints and concerns with us through the Internet. We will also continue to update our printed information, including our brochure, *Do you have concerns about Provincial or Municipal Government Services?*

With this work well underway, we have set the following goals for 2005-2006:

1. Ensure citizens' complaints are addressed in a timely, comprehensive, objective, and independent manner.

2. Promote awareness, access, and understanding of the Office of the Ombudsman.

3. Promote fairness and accountability in public sector administration.

4. Promote initiatives such as government policy development and review, as well as initiatives focusing on youth, seniors, and cultural diversity.

And, finally, we are looking forward to hosting the annual meeting of the Canadian Parliamentary Ombudsman in May 2005 and the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates conference in September 2005.

Contact Us:

Office of the Ombudsman
5670 Spring Garden Road, Suite 700
PO Box 2152
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3B7

Within Halifax Regional Municipality:
902-424-6780

Toll free within Nova Scotia:
1-800-670-1111

Youth Services, toll free within Nova Scotia:
1-888-839-6884

Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing
Inquiry Line, toll free within Nova Scotia:
1-877-670-1100

Fax: 902-424-6675

www.gov.ns.ca/ombu/